

AN *Address*  
ADDRESS

TO THE

HIGHER RANKS

OF

PEOPLE

IN THE

PARISH of ST. MARY,

HULL.

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The FOURTH EDITION.

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The Petition which gave occasion to the following Address, had its rise wholly among the Persons who are mentioned in the title; yet as that may, perhaps, include many who disapprove the proceedings of the rest, they will accept my apology, if the title is too large for the occasion. It has given me much pain that there was a necessity of any address. If I could do it consistently with my sense of duty under my present circumstances, I could put these sheets into the flames with more satisfaction than I now commit them to the press.

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A N

A D D R E S S, &c.

BELoved BRETHREN,

**A**S I am no longer permitted to speak to you from the pulpit, you will bear with me, if I take this method (which is the only one in my power) of addressing you from the press. If I could have been so happy as to have obtained access to you in private, every address of this kind might have been rendered unnecessary; but as a mutual reserve, occasioned by the great difference in the spirit and principles which form our conversation, has deprived me of that method of expressing my sentiments; I am urged in this public manner to expostulate with you. I wish, if possible, to convince you, that as the treatment I have met with was manifestly unchristian, so it was neither so liberal, nor even equitable, as might naturally have been expected in a town of trade, like Hull, and from a commercial people.

Commerce, tho' it cannot make us Christians, is usually observed to have very beneficial effects upon the mind, by rubbing off its



prejudices, and giving it a turn for just and ingenuous sentiments. The City of Bristol is said to afford a proof of the truth of this remark. In that City, "pure and undefiled religion" is treated with every mark of respect. It is true, that Christianity appears there in her fairest form, and even commands the veneration of all who behold her. I can now recollect many persons in that City who deserve the esteem and admiration of all who are so happy as to know them. If this be true, Bristol is worthy of imitation; and it were greatly to be wished, that all her commercial sisters in this favoured island would follow her example. Tho' I have mentioned Bristol in particular, I doubt not but there are many trading towns in this country, where the followers of Jesus are esteemed; and which, on that account are deserving of the same praise\*.

Hull is celebrated for the variety and abundance of spiritual mercies, with which it hath been indulged for some time past. Its fame reached

\* Since I wrote the above lines, I have seen a celebrated letter to the Sheriffs of the City of Bristol, in which the elegant writer seems to take a pleasure in considering himself as "the representative of an honest, well-ordered and virtuous City; of a people who (as he says) preserve more of the original English simplicity, and purity of manners, than perhaps any other." These are his own words, and in my judgement, they account for that candid and honourable reception which the religion of Jesus Christ has met with on its late revival in that city.



reached me at the distance of some hundred miles. Indeed, I have heard its praises in very different and distant parts of this kingdom. The account of so great blessings, and of the unusual harmony which was reported to subsist among the ministers of the gospel of every denomination, led me to imagine that Hull was become a little heaven upon earth; and that I should surely find (after some storms and distresses which had troubled me in my Christian course) a certain divine repose in a place so greatly favoured of the Lord: And I have not been wholly disappointed. That God hath been in this place, is evident. It is easy to trace his divine footsteps thro' the hearts of many.

He has lighted up many sacred fires around us in Hull; and if he should give them a deeper glow, and intenser heat, a warmth would be felt thro' the whole town. At least, under such circumstances, the church of God would become terrible to its foes. Hull would then merit its present reputation. A secret and internal harmony would then take place; a firm and unshaken union of souls by the same spirit in the bonds of the common gospel. All separate interests in religion would immediately fall into one. We should be all governed by a pure desire to see the kingdom of Jesus Christ advanced by any instruments he might think good to make use of for that purpose.

Pardon me this digression. YOU have at present the peculiar claim to my attention; and I heartily wish that this paper may fall into your hands in some favourable moment when business and pleasure cease to agitate, and your minds are disposed to listen to me without prejudice; when no eye is upon you but that of your Creator, and you are free to give a vent to your feelings without dissimulation. This mode of address may be more agreeable to your taste, and better adapted to raise, at least for the present, a flush of humanity and reason, than any other that I could have used. If I am able to convey the truth to your minds in any way, I shall think myself happy. If by any means I could save some of you, who seem to have become my enemies, only because I have told you the truth: if I could win your souls to Jesus, our adorable Saviour, I should think it a happy conquest. The late treatment I have met with has not impaired my good will towards you: I do not write this either to condemn you, or to vindicate myself so much as to give you a proof of my regard for you, and of my love for your souls.

I would beg leave to tell you of the peculiar grace which God hath been pleased to show you.—His love to Hull hath been wonderful. He hath given a proof of his love for the children of men, by an illustrious example of it in this town. The place, as you know, swarms  
with

with inhabitants. All the places of worship, if they were filled at the same time, would not contain a third part of them. Now in what manner can God shew his love to the souls of these his creatures? How can he give them the best, the most striking expression of his grace and good will towards them? Surely by sending to them the messengers of his mercy. Accordingly we find that he has actually supplied the several places of worship with judicious, faithful, and able ministers. The town of Hull is as remarkable for the riches of the gospel which it enjoys, as it is for its commercial affluence, or any advantages which are purely of a temporal nature.

But you may be disposed to ask how such uncommon favour as I have mentioned has been shewn to YOU? The question is important; and it is the chief design of this paper to give you an answer to it.

Permit me then to observe to you, That God beholding how indifferent you were to that salvation, which he had brought into the High-Church, and the several Chapels, or rather, how unwilling you were to "seek his face," and to go where he might have been found; in great pity to your souls, condescended, notwithstanding such perverseness, to seek you, and to come where you were. Tho' you were not disposed to visit him, he did not in anger, as he justly might have done, leave you in that darkness which you had preferred



to his blessed light ; but he has brought this light so near you, as to oblige you to see it, unless you obstinately persist to shut your eyes against it. There can be no doubt, that it was your duty to have gone to the High Church, or any of the Chapels where you were informed, the gospel was preached : and if immortality had been an object of your concern, your inclination would have corresponded with your duty, and you would have waited upon God in any place where you heard he was, not only because you ought to have paid that respect to the divine STRANGER, but also because in that case, your " souls would have thirsted for the presence of the living God."

The Lord had rained down the manna in great plenty around your tents, but you chose rather to perish, than to be humble, and diligent enough to go forth and gather it. What could the Lord do more ? Only one thing ; and that he was pleased to do, for he broke open your tent door, and scattered the manna, the precious manna before your faces. After such a miracle of grace, if you continue to despise him, and to tread upon his mercies, can he be blamed, if he leave your souls to perish ?

These remarks admit of an easy application. The Low Church till very lately was the resort of the more polished orders of people in the Sunday afternoons, when the High-Church is supplied by Mr. Milner, whose plainness

plainness of speech; considering his acknowledged piety and great abilities, should not, one would imagine, have given offence to any; but rather have endeared him to every considerate and virtuous person. YOU, however, thought yourselves happy in having one place of worship in Hull, where you could admit your elegant friends to sit with you, without fear of being disturbed, either by the multitude of poor people with which you have been since infested; or by the fidelity of the preacher, another still more terrible grievance, under which you have lately been obliged to groan.

The great change which took place last year in the Low-Church was effected in such a manner as to demonstrate, that, there was a divine interposition in your favour. The first entrance of the gospel amongst you was attended with many remarkable circumstances, in all which the power, the wisdom and grace of God were so clearly manifested, that, unless you had been blind, you must have seen them: Such an expression of his love and presence must have commanded your hearts, and obliged you to adore him. The gospel certainly was introduced to you with the fullest evidence of the good will both of God and man. When the first tumults were over, which such an innovation might naturally occasion, you were free to have taken a review of the wonderful providences which were concerned in it. Your  
gracious

gracious benefactor, the adorable IMMANUEL, treated you with all that goodness for which he is celebrated by those who know him. As it was the desire of his soul to gain you for himself,—at his first introduction to your notice he was pleased to assume his loveliest appearance, and to shine with so much authority, gentleness, and wisdom, thro' his servant Mr. King, that yourselves were somewhat allured to esteem the minister, tho' you knew not the divine Master who filled him with his Spirit, and blessed him with his own temper.

Usually the gospel is preached by plain and unlettered men. And even amongst ourselves who were more immediately designed for the ministry (at least by ourselves, and friends, and consequently prepared for it, as some speak, by the improvements of education) there are many who in the warmth of their love for souls are apt to forget these their advantages, and to reduce themselves to the standard of common men who speak by the Spirit of God. But the disposition of things in your case was very uncommon. The Lord was pleased to stoop down to the infirmities of the creatures, whom he had made. He knew the prejudices of your minds against his religion: the unhappy bias which had hung for a long time upon the town, and which was not at all removed from St. Mary's parish in the late revival of religion in this place: the formal, and unmeaning way of preaching you had been  
long



long used to ; and the surprize and wrath which would have arisen, if his gospel had been ushered in all at once in its usual plainness, without some alleviating circumstances to correct those humours which otherwise might naturally be expected to appear upon such an occasion.

He was pleased therefore in his great mercy to send to you a select messenger of his grace. How delicate was the wisdom of God in this matter ! He appeared to hesitate even amongst the best ; as if his love had occasioned a suspense which of them he should select ; which of them he should send to you ; which would be most acceptable ; by which he could win most of you to himself. I speak this from my own knowledge of some particular providences, which were concerned upon this occasion ; and I cannot but think, that when you have taken these into consideration, you must not be a little affected with the singular grace which has been shown to you.

I would not say any thing for which my own spirit might grieve when the hand that is now moving over this paper is cold in the dust. I would not even seem to bring a disgrace upon the gospel by saying any thing in an improper temper. If any of the above reflections, or such as may follow, in the course of this address, should be thought to have an air of severity ; it may be said to have proceeded from the nature of the subject. Some may possibly

possibly think that it required much darker colours than I was willing to give it.—If the shaft were ever so keen, the unconscious breast would be impenetrable to it. To which I must add, that if TRUTH hath sharpened it to make it pierce deeply enough, LOVE hath stood by and polished it that the wound might be attended with the least possible pain.

Before I proceed to defend myself, it will be proper to bring this part of my subject to a close. It is by far the most important part, and therefore has been so much insisted on. If I am so happy as to engage your attention to it, so far as to prevail with you to acknowledge the truth of what I have said concerning the distinguished love of God to you ; I shall be little solicitous of the good opinions of those, whose “ hearts are so gross, their ears so heavy, “ and their eyes so closed, that they cannot be “ at any time converted :” who have been so long habituated to lies,—that in their wretched delusion they “ call darkness, light ; and light, “ darkness ; put bitter, for sweet ; and sweet, for bitter ; call evil, good ; and good, evil.” Such unhappy persons are the objects of my compassion : I could weep over them, if that would do them good :—but they are no longer capable of being addressed as reasonable creatures. I request the attention of those who are not enemies to virtuous consideration ; for I would not involve all in the same common censure : Many of you, I believe, are  
not

not my enemies. I appeal to your conscience, and reason. Is it not evident to both that I have in the above pages "fully declared the thing as it is?" Whatever exceptions you may have taken to MY youth, or way of preaching, you will acknowledge that God has sent you ONE minister at least whom you cannot blame; whose mature age and experience, unaffected piety, and solid judgment; and above all, his uncommon gentleness of mind have even constrained you to be silent.

If Mr. King's health would suffer him to reside constantly at Hull, and to preach more frequently, there could be no one, in my opinion, better adapted to the Low-Church, or more likely to be useful, especially to persons in your rank of life. I could not wish you any other minister. But as ill health and the cries of his flock at Middleton solicited his return into the country, Mr. King applied to me, who was at that time near three hundred miles from hence, to supply his place, at Hull and Middleton alternately, as his health and other circumstances might require. A variety of striking providences (which it is not necessary for me to relate) as well as a great and divine encouragement of the SPIRIT who "directs the paths of those who love him," convinced me it was the will of God that I should accept my beloved brother's invitation, and go down to Hull. Accordingly I followed "the cloud," till it rested in the Low-Church; where multitudes have been refreshed under



its shadow. Sometimes the very doors have been crouded. Even the skirts of the cloud of glory have been delightful to many. In the midst of many conflicts, the Lord has been working by my unworthy hands. As a proof of this, I need only mention the many tears that have been shed since the first report that I should be obliged to leave Hull; the incessant prayers that have been offered up in the various parts of this large town; and the change of countenance that appeared in the congregation when I declared in the course of a late sermon that I was forced to leave them. Some were so greatly affected, as to be obliged to go out of the church; and some felt sufficient anguish of soul to prevent their returning in the afternoon.\*

From

\* When the rights of humanity are pleaded, they have no more influence upon some hearts, than those of justice and religion. Many persons, one would think, do even disdain to weep. I heard of one Lady, who declared, that she could not conceive what it was, that made the people weep: and of another, who said, you may know by their weeping, that they are Methodists.—By the same rule a little reversed, you may know that they were not Methodists by their hard hearts. It is no disgrace for a sinner to mourn before God. And I must assure those *gentle* Ladies, whoever they are, that it would be no disparagement to them to weep over their transgressions. Whatever they may imagine, no other sacrifice that they can offer, will be accepted of God, but that of a broken and humble heart. Many, I fear, harden their own hearts, lest their companions should call them Methodists. It is a name, which many dread and abhor. But for my own part, I am not ashamed publicly to confess that I value the prayers, and good will of the

From what I have said, I think, it may reasonably be concluded, that the Lord has shewn a peculiar love for you. What greatly confirms me in this sentiment, is, the good will he has created in my own heart towards you. I cannot but look upon this as a reflection (tho' a dim reflection) of his own infinite loving-kindness.

I come now more particularly to vindicate myself. The grand charges which have been brought against me, are,—that I am too young to *instruct* so wise a congregation:—too vehement in my address to *please* so polite an audience as usually assembles at the Low-Church;—and, what is extremely unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit, instead of a sermon-book, I have only taken *the Plain Bible* with me into that sacred place.

These heavy charges have been urged against me, (with no small eloquence, as I suppose) in the private conversations of some who are ranked among the more refined persons in this town. Discerning people will admire such speeches rather for the politeness of the expression, than for the weight of their meaning, or the virtue of their design. If I had been informed of more important objections, I should certainly take notice of them, if it were only to give a greater dignity to this address. Small praise can be obtained by an-

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swering.

Methodists more than all the applause, and smiles of the great and noble of the earth.

swering such *arguments* as the above: Yet, as something must be said by way of reply to them, the whole merit must consist in its shortness.

It would appear a good objection, to say, that I am too young to preach, if my age was below that which is prescribed by the Church of England to those who enter into her service. But this is so far from being true, that I might have obtained full orders a year ago, if a regard to my first solemn engagement, and fidelity in my office, had not excluded me from that favour. I was persuaded by the Holy Ghost to take upon me the office of a Deacon. I confess that I was *divinely persuaded*: and do here provoke all the Casuists among the Clergy, to make it appear to any intelligent and unbiassed person, that the pious and forcible expression, which perhaps they may remember in the ordination of Deacons has, or can have, any other meaning less awful and important than that which I have mentioned. Unperjured before the altar, and possessed with the most solemn views of the nature of the office into which I then entered, I have since that time "exercised myself to preserve a conscience void "of-offence towards God and towards men." The same SPIRIT who MOVED me in the design never deserted me in the execution. I can give my testimony to the truth of the Apostle's declaration, That "they who have "used the office of a Deacon well, purchase "to themselves a good degree, and great "boldness



“boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

This declaration has given me much comfort at the time when those privileges in the Church of England were detained from me which my education, my predilection for her, and my labours in her service gave me reason to expect.

To say therefore that I am too young to be a messenger of God; is, at once to oppose God who hath already appointed me to that office, and the Governors of the Church, who have fixed upon that age which they thought the most proper limit for the entrance of young men into her service.—Besides, if I were even much younger, than I appear to be, it would not become persons of mature understanding to disesteem me purely on that account. Hoary age cannot sanctify falsehood; nor is truth less lovely because it comes from the lips of youth. If any despise my youth, I glory in it. I cannot express the satisfaction I feel this moment in presenting the early sacrifice of my health and spirits to Him who made me for himself. May it ever burn upon his altar! That circumstance of my youth, which may render me contemptible to some, has been attended with very different effects upon others. Many have confessed that their prejudices against religion have been entirely removed by a conviction, at once solemn and pleasing to the mind, that “the power of Christ rested upon me,” and that “his strength was made perfect in weakness.” I am animated, I ac-

knowledge, by these considerations, to proceed with more alacrity and vigour, whilst youth remains, that I may bring in the more glory to my God, and at last obtain the crown of eternal life.

As to my extempore way of preaching, I shall say little of it. The subject at large certainly deserves a careful discussion; and if it should fall into proper hands, might afford many observations which would be useful to the ministers of Christ, as well as to the Church in general. In my own vindication, I shall only say, that, after having tried the other methods, which are in common use, I see many reasons (in my own case at least) to prefer that which is at present the subject of so much blame. It has appeared to me to be the most liberal, and affecting; the most easy, and apostolical; and the most generally pleasing:—and by far the most successful.

Many inconveniences of a very serious nature attend the common way of preaching from written sermons. I shall mention one, which is less obvious. It is apt to create in the preacher's mind a certain indolent dependence upon something, which he thinks he has already brought to a point; and in which he has no further occasion for the divine assistance: a disposition natural to us, but exceedingly detestable before God; and which does not need the present art of cultivation to improve it.

Besides, when any person has habituated  
himself

himself to that indolent way of preaching, which is so much admired, he must find it extremely difficult, when suddenly called upon to give his public testimony to the truth, unless he happens to have his sermon in his *pocket*.

This brings to my remembrance an anecdote, that I lately heard ; and which affords an *illustrious* example of the truth of this observation.

A certain Dignitary of the Church, being in one of the polite places of resort, was requested by some of his friends, to favour them with a sermon in the Cathedral. His Lordship replied, that he could not possibly do it ; for he had determined to lay aside preaching, and therefore to cut off all solicitations of that sort, had brought no sermons along with him. Glorious Apology ! sufficient one would imagine, to shake any Christian kingdom with sorrow, or indignation. However, the day is coming when every character shall have its due praise : when the purple and the lawn shall be torn away ; and the soul stand naked before the tribunal of unerring justice.

Many usually pay an unmeaning compliment to the first Apostles at the expence of the Universal Church of Christ. They pretend at least that the assistance of the Spirit was confined to the first ages of Christianity. This they do with the same temper and views as would have led them in those ages to deny that there is any SPIRIT at all. The Apostles are indebted to their distance from us for those unwelcome honours



nours which some are disposed to give them. Present examples, tho' of inferior lustre are dazzling and offensive: but the Apostles are too far off to hurt any persons either in their reputation or interests. However if we may conceive them for a moment in their mortal appearance, as in the days of their sufferings, to approach some of their pretended admirers, it would not be unnatural to expect a *prodigious* transformation. The plausible smooth tongue which had been once so lavish in their praises, would suddenly be armed with the bitterest invectives; or would turn at least from the Apostles, with much gravity, to the commendation of the simple and various Patriarchs.—Present virtue gives too much pain to be greatly commended.

But that I may now conclude this part of my defence, let me take the liberty to say, that I regard the moderate talent I have in speaking as the gift of God. Even the smallest gifts, in this view, are to be highly valued. It would be blamable to impose the yoke upon my own neck, after he has broken it off; and to preach written sermons, after he has favoured me with the ability to preach without a copy; and has shown me that this method of declaring his will, is the most agreeable to himself, and the most beneficial to men. Besides, if I should lay myself under such unnecessary restraints, as some recommend, who will undertake to promise me that they shall ever be taken off again? I acknowledge

knolwedge that I am somewhat tender in this respect. I act upon the most serious conviction. I hope my friends will indulge me, if they cannot entirely enter into my sentiments.

As to that vehemency in my manner of speaking, which has furnished a pretence for a third complaint; I solemnly declare, that the warmth of my affection for you, my tender concern for your immortal and most precious interests, and my regard for my Master's honour, have given that little energy to my voice, expression to my countenance, and action to my hand, which unfortunately have offended. However, if at any time I have appeared to give the reins to my affections, I still held them in my hand, and reserved to myself a liberty to repress them at my pleasure. In the midst of the tumults that troubled you, my own spirit was undisturbed. Upon the stage, or in any other place where God, where virtue, where your souls, were not concerned, you would think it criminal in a speaker to be unmoved.—But after all, it is not my speaking in the pulpit instead of reading; it is not any vehemency in air, or manner; it is not even my youth, that hath given the great offence; it is not your understanding, but your pride and false delicacy, which have been shocked. A corrupt nature hath trembled from its foundation. I have freely declared that cards, plays, balls, assemblies, and the several enormities which accompany them, are to be ranked among “the  
works

“works of the flesh :” that you cannot attend these, and be at the same time “unspotted from the world :” that unless “you visit the fatherless, and widows in their affliction,” you can have no pretention to “pure religion and undefiled before God and the father :” that you cannot pay such gracious visits, without declining many of those, which at present engage you : that it is scarcely possible you can “adorn yourselves with good works,” as God requires, unless you convert some of the glittering ornaments, which surround your persons, to the use of the poor ; as well as much of that time, which is now employed in adjusting them with such a curious felicity as shall best strike the beholder’s eye, and divert the attention from the mind to the more powerful attractions of the person.

—These were the true Springs of the late Petition, which insinuates that I have given general dissatisfaction to the parish, when at the same time the Church could not contain the multitudes that attended my ministry. If ten fastidious people without religion, are to represent a whole parish consisting, perhaps, of almost as many thousands, what the petitioners say, is true. I have given *them* great dissatisfaction. Perhaps they detest me, as much as the virtue I recommend. But if by the parish, we are to understand (as I think we are) the greatest number of persons residing in the parish, I may fairly conclude from the great and general regard which has been shown me ; and  
from



from the protest, which has been made against the Petition, that the Parish hath been greatly misrepresented, and that I (if that were of any consequence) have been greatly injured.

I have only mentioned ten persons as engaged in the petition, tho' it is said to have been signed by fifteen; because I am informed that some of the Gentlemen are sorry they were so unwise as to subscribe it without deliberation.

Conscious of my own integrity, and of the justice of my cause; and sensible also of the concern, which, every person of virtue ought to take in it; I appeal to the candour of the public. I call upon the protectors of the Church of England, who can respect our religion, ungraced by titles, uncorrupted by large revenues and in her native purity speaking the language of simple truth. If the declining virtue of this nation deserve your care; if the languishing religion of our country be an object of your regard; I call upon you, in the name of God, to recollect your proper dignity, and to give to the public some substantial proof that this religion has employed your thoughts, and that you only waited for some proper opportunity of showing your reverence of that God whom England worships; and for whose name of its wisest and most venerable men have many shed their blood.

I have thus endeavoured to leave you a testimony of my faithfulness and good will towards you.

you. Whatever imperfections there may be in the language of this address, or the manner in which it has been conducted, you must be obliged to acknowledge that it contains some truths of importance, which deserve your consideration.—There are some persons who merit all the severity with which they are here treated, and perhaps much more. If truth be severe, it is not my fault. The hour is approaching when perhaps the severity of truth will be more universally felt than even the effects of mercy. I do not pray that my enemies may be put to confusion in the day when we shall appear together, but, that rather they may be found my eternal friends. I am,

*Your affectionate servant*

HULL, July 28,

*In the Gospel*

1778.

B. B. COLLINS.

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P. S. I have been frequently obliged in the preceding pages to mention the name of my excellent friend and brother, Mr. King, I should not have taken the liberty of expressing the high opinion I have always entertained of him, in so public a manner, if it could have been avoided: But the course of my argument required it: and I was proving a great truth. In such a case, all little delicacies should yield to things of importance. I flatter myself that I shall be more easily excused, as every one will confess, that I have said nothing concerning Mr. King, but what is strictly true.

